The term “composite subdocuments” is not in the terms defined in paragraph 0016 However, the term “subdocument” is included as a defined term in paragraph 0016 as follows:

“The term "subdocument" is applied to a collection within the cover document of text, video, audio, graphical or pictorial data, or a mixture of these data forms, that is to be given a digital signature.

The term “subdocument” must be given the restrictive definition provided per the comments to MPEP 2111.01 referenced below.

Claim 1 is modified as shown below to provide greater clarity as to the specification of the designation “cover document” and “subdocuments”. The term “composite subdocuments” is deleted.

Claim 1
A method of controlling the digital signature process to allow controlled creation, modification, signature generation and signature verification of multiple subdocuments within a single cover document, comprising the steps of: creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of one or more said subdocuments within that document and for controlling through the cover document access to one or more said subdocuments within that cover document for creation, editing, signature generation or signature verification; creating through a menu associated with the cover document an access to one or more said subdocuments within that cover document for edit and display of said subdocument in that cover document; creating through a menu associated with that cover document the transmission of said subdocument within that cover document object to a signature-generation program to allow creation of a digital signature for each said subdocument within that cover document and for the verification of that digital signature; and providing in that cover document a display and/or storage of any digital signature created for said subdocument within that cover document, together with the information required or useful to use the digital signature.

Claims 2-11 were rejected because of their dependency on claim 1. No other grounds for rejection of claims 2-11 were given. Should the revised Claim 1 be approved, it is assumed that claims 2-11 will be likewise considered.

An updated patent application is attached.

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JUL 06 2007

Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP)

2111.01 Plain Meaning [R-5] - 2100 Patentability

IV. < APPLICANT MAY BE OWN LEXICOGRAPHER

An applicant is entitled to be his or her own lexicographer and may rebut the presumption that claim terms are to be given their ordinary and customary meaning by clearly setting forth a definition of the term that is different from its ordinary and customary meaning(s). See *In re Paulsen*, 30 F.3d 1475, 1480, 31 USPQ2d 1671, 1674 (Fed. Cir. 1994) (inventor may define specific terms used to describe invention, but must do so "with reasonable clarity, deliberateness, and precision" and, if done, must "'set out his uncommon definition in some manner within the patent disclosure' so as to give one of ordinary skill in the art notice of the change" in meaning) (quoting *Intellicall, Inc. v. Phonometrics, Inc.*, 952 F.2d 1384, 1387-88, 21 USPQ2d 1383, 1386 (Fed. Cir. 1992)). Where an explicit definition is provided by the applicant for a term, that definition will control interpretation of the term as it is used in the claim. *Toro Co. v. White Consolidated Industries Inc.*, 199 F.3d 1295, 1301, 53 USPQ2d 1065, 1069 (Fed. Cir. 1999) (meaning of words used in a claim is not construed in a "lexicographic vacuum, but in the context of the specification and drawings"). Any special meaning assigned to a term "must be sufficiently clear in the specification that any departure from common usage would be so understood by a person of experience in the field of the invention." *Multiform Desiccants Inc. v. Medzam Ltd.*, 133 F.3d 1473, 1477, 45 USPQ2d 1429, 1432 (Fed. Cir. 1998). See also *Process Control Corp. v. HydReclaim Corp.*, 190 F.3d 1350, 1357, 52 USPQ2d 1029, 1033 (Fed. Cir. 1999) and MPEP § 2173.05(a). The specification should also be relied on for more than just explicit lexicography or clear disavowal of claim scope to determine the meaning of a claim term when applicant acts as his or her own lexicographer; the meaning of a particular claim term may be defined by implication, that is, according to the usage of the term in >the< context in the specification. See *Phillips v. AWH Corp.*, *>415 F.3d 1303<, 75 USPQ2d 1321 (Fed. Cir. 2005) (*en banc*); and *Vitronics Corp. v. Conceptronic Inc.*, 90 F.3d 1576, 1583, 39 USPQ2d 1573, 1577 (Fed. Cir. 1996). Compare *Merck & Co., Inc., v. Teva Pharms. USA, Inc.*, 395 F.3d 1364, 1370, 73 USPQ2d 1641, 1646 (Fed. Cir. 2005), where the court held that patentee failed to redefine the ordinary meaning of "about" to mean "exactly" in clear enough terms to justify the counterintuitive definition of "about." ("When a patentee acts as his own lexicographer in redefining the meaning of particular claim terms away from their ordinary meaning, he must clearly express that intent in the written description.").

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What is claimed is:

1. ~~A method of controlling the digital signature process to allow controlled creation, modification, signature generation and signature verification of multiple subdocuments in a single cover document, comprising the steps of: creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of the composite subdocuments and for controlling through the cover document access to the subdocuments for creation, editing, signature generation or signature verification; creating through a menu associated with the cover document an access to the subdocument for edit and display of the subdocument in the cover document; creating through a menu associated with the cover document the transmission of a subdocument object to a signature-generation program to allow creation of a digital signature for each subdocument and for the verification of that digital signature; and providing in the cover document a display and/or storage of any digital signature created for a cover document, together with the information required or useful to use the digital signature.~~
~~(modified as per our discussions)~~

A method of controlling the digital signature process to allow controlled creation, modification, signature generation and signature verification of multiple subdocuments within a single cover document, comprising the steps of: creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of one or more said subdocuments within that document and for controlling through the cover document access to one or more said subdocuments within that cover document for creation, editing, signature generation or signature verification; creating through a menu associated with the cover document an access to one or more said subdocuments within that cover document for edit and display of said subdocument in that cover document; creating through a menu associated with that cover document the transmission of said subdocument within that cover document object to a signature-generation program to allow creation of a digital signature for each said subdocument within that cover document and for the verification of that digital signature; and providing in that cover document a display and/or storage of any digital signature created for said subdocument within that cover document, together with the information required or useful to use the digital signature.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of the ~~composite~~ said subdocuments and for controlling through the cover document access to ~~the~~ said subdocuments for creation, editing, signature generation or signature verification ~~consists of~~comprises the steps of: creating a protected document as a cover document, creating within the cover document a reserved area or areas for each subsequently created subdocument;

providing for the creation of a subdocument object for each subsequently created subdocument by embedding an object in the cover document or creating a separate document; providing for the copying the contents of ~~the~~ said subdocument into the subdocument object; opening ~~the~~ said subdocument object for edit; after editing, transferring the contents of ~~the~~ said subdocument object into the subdocument area in the cover document; and destroying ~~the~~ said subdocument object.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein said creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of the ~~composite~~ said subdocuments and for controlling through the cover document access to ~~the~~ said subdocuments for creation, editing, signature generation or signature verification ~~consists of~~comprises the steps of: creating as a cover document a protected database with fields representing the content of ~~the~~ said subdocuments together with any associated digital signatures and information; and providing through a database management program access to ~~those~~ said database fields to allow in a controlled manner editing of ~~the~~ said subdocument fields; and providing through a database management program a user view of the contents of ~~the~~ said database fields.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein said creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of the ~~composite~~ said subdocuments and for controlling through the cover document access to ~~the~~ said subdocuments for creation, editing, signature generation or signature verification ~~consists of~~comprises the steps of: creating a protected document as a cover document; creating within the cover document a reserved area or areas for each subsequently created subdocument; providing for the creation of a web page displaying the contents of the subdocument area of the cover page, said contents being exposed for editing in the web page; and transferring the contents of the web page after editing into ~~the~~ said subdocument area in the cover document.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein said creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of the ~~composite~~ said subdocuments and for controlling through the cover document access to ~~the~~ said subdocuments for creation, editing, signature generation or signature verification ~~consists of~~comprises the steps of: creating a protected document as a cover document; providing for the creation of a separate protected document for each subdocument to be subsequently added; providing a representation of any separate subdocument document on the cover document; providing for the controlled access to a separate subdocument document for editing; and providing for re-instantiating protection of ~~the~~ said subdocument document and the transfer of the edited subdocument document content to the cover document.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein said creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of the ~~composite~~ said subdocuments and for controlling through the cover document access to ~~the~~ said subdocuments for creation, editing, signature generation or signature verification ~~consists of~~comprises the steps of: creating a protected document as a cover document; creating within the cover document a reserved area or areas for each subsequently created subdocument; and providing for the ~~unprotection~~ removal of protection of all or a portion of ~~the~~ said subdocument reserved area for user edits and the subsequent imposition of protection to any unprotected area.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein said creating through a menu associated with the cover document the transmission of a subdocument object to a signature-generation program to allow creation of a digital signature for each subdocument and for the verification of that digital signature comprises the steps of: creating a temporary or permanent subdocument object by embedding an object in the cover document or creating a separate document; copying the contents of ~~the~~ said subdocument into the subdocument object; obtaining from the user identifying information; transmitting ~~the~~ said subdocument object and the identifying information to an external signature-generation program for the generation of a digital signature; placing the digital signature and any applicable identifying information in the cover document in text, hidden text, or an embedded object, or a combination of these media; and

9. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of formatting the cover document suitable for printing in the final form and formatting the contained subdocuments and signatures for data parsing.

10. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of verifying the user identity utilized for the generation of digital signatures by requiring the simultaneous reading of physical tokens or user characteristics, such as RFID keys, proximity cards, biometric readers, "smart cards", and other unique personal identification means.

11. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of maintaining within the cover document or as a separate file under the control of the cover document control program an audit file containing a record of signature generation attempts, signature generation failures, and digital signature generation deletions involved with digital signature generation through the cover document.

12. A method of creating a hierarchy of subdocuments and approval signatures, comprising the steps of: creating a protected cover document for the creation, display and editing of the ~~composite~~ subdocuments and for controlling through the cover document access to ~~the~~ said subdocuments for creation, editing, signature generation

or signature verification; creating through a menu associated with the cover document the ability to access and edit a representation of ~~the~~ said subdocument object that is then transferred to a visible, protected display in the cover document; creating through a menu associated with the cover document a means for the transmission of ~~a~~ said subdocument to a signature-generation program to allow creation of a digital signature for each said subdocument and for the verification of that digital signature; providing through a menu associated with the cover document a display and/or storage of any digital signature created for ~~a~~ said subdocument, together with the information required or useful to use the digital signature; providing through a menu associated with the cover document the generation of an approval signature for an approval range of the cover document including one or more said subdocuments, any associated digital signatures and accompanying signature information, or other approval signatures; providing protection to the integrity of the approval signature by either preventing the editing of said subdocuments within the approval range for a signed approval signature or destroying any approval signature whose approval range includes an edited subdocument; and providing in the cover document a display and/or storage of any approval signature, together with the information required or useful to use the approval signature.

13. A method according to claim 12, wherein ~~the~~ said approval signature generation is accomplished by providing a means for the transmission of the user's identifying information together with an image of this range, possibly edited, to a signature-generation program or module to allow the creation of a digital signature for the contents of the range.

14. A method according to claim 12, further comprising the step of establishing a minimum approval authority level or a list of allowed approvers for each approval signature and preventing the generation of an approval signature if the signer does not have the necessary authority.

15. A method according to claim 12, further comprising the step of preventing the generation of the approval signature when a subdocument within the approval range has not been validly signed.

16. A method of allowing comments in a cover document, comprising the steps of: providing in the cover document a method of inserting comment objects; and providing in the transmission of a subdocument object to a signature-generation program in the creation or verification of a subdocument digital signature that any reference to the comments objects be deleted prior to the transmission to the signature-generation program.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein the means for providing in the cover document a method of inserting comment objects comprises the insertion into the cover document of a link to a comment object.

18. A method according to claim 16, wherein the means for providing in the cover document a method of inserting comment objects comprises the insertion between delineation objects the comment.